

# **Multilevel Electoral Competition: Regional Elections and Party Systems in Spain**

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### *Abstract*

Regionalisation in the form of the creation of Autonomous Communities (ACs) has played a significant role in shaping the Spanish party system since the transition to democracy in 1977. Parties are divided into state-wide parties, operating at both national and regional levels, and non state-wide parties. The latter are most important in the historic nations of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. Autonomous elections are generally second order elections, with lower turnout and with results generally following the national pattern. In certain cases, the presence of non-state wide parties challenges this pattern and in Catalonia a distinct political arena exists with its own characteristics. Autonomous parliaments and governments have provided new opportunities for both state-wide and non-state-wide parties and served as a power base for political figures within the parties.

## *Introduction*

The reconfiguration of Spain as an *Estado de las autonomías* (state of the autonomies) has produced multiple arenas for political competition, strategic opportunities for political actors, and possibilities for tactical voting. We ask how the regional level fits into this pattern of multilevel competition; what incentives this provides for the use of party resources; how regionalisation has affected the development of political parties; how these define their strategies in relation to the different levels of party activity and of government; how these are perceived by electors and affect electoral behaviour; and whether there are systematic differences in electoral behaviour at state and regional levels.

We employ the concept of second order elections, originally developed in reference to European elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1985), adapting it to the Spanish case. The basic premise is that electoral behaviour in second order elections is shaped by political factors in the first order arena ensuring that first order elections receive greater attention and experience higher levels of participation. The lower incentive to participate disproportionately affects supporters of the national governing party, while supporters of other parties use the occasion to express their disapproval of the national government. Since the stakes are lower in second order elections, there is also more incentive to vote for minor parties that are unlikely to play a significant role in national politics. As a result the governing national party tends to do worse, absolutely and relatively, in second order elections, while opposition and minor parties do better. On the other hand, this general effect is mediated by local factors, so that we might find greater variation between second order elections, especially in a diverse country like Spain. The existence of governments at the territorial level has provided a strong incentive for parties to territorialise their own structures, so affecting the party system in Spain as a whole.

## *The Transition to Democracy and the Regional/National Question*

Regional and national cleavages are an enduring feature of Spanish history, but their modern significance dates from the late nineteenth century, when a profound crisis erupted in the context of industrialisation, the collapse of empire and new social conflicts. Territorial political movements emerged in Catalonia and the Basque provinces, rapidly changing their discourse from regionalism to a nationalism, followed

by a rather weaker movement in Galicia. During the Second Republic there was a further diffusion of regionalism, with autonomy-orientated movements springing up in Andalusia and elsewhere. Rigid centralisation and suppression under the Franco regime helped to consolidate nationalist feelings in Catalonia and the Basque Country, which had enjoyed a measure of self-rule under the Second Republic in the 1930s, and forged an alliance between democratic forces and those of territorial defence (Linz 1985; Shabad, 1987).

The restoration of autonomous government was therefore a priority during the democratic transition. The 1978 constitution was a compromise between centralist and regionalist demands, providing for the establishment of 'Autonomous Communities' (ACs) where there was demand for them, but making it much easier for those regions that had voted for autonomy statutes under the Second Republic (Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia) to re-create them. In practice, demands for autonomy spread rapidly and by the mid-1980s there were seventeen Autonomous Communities varying in size, power and self-consciousness. Apart from the three historic nationalities, Andalusia also proceeded under article 151, giving it advanced status, while Navarre modernised an existing *foral*<sup>1</sup> system of autonomy. The other ACs have proceeded more slowly under Article 143 of the constitution (Aja 1999; Vallés 1992).<sup>2</sup>

These five cases, together with the Canary Islands, contrast with the 'ordinary' status regions, producing a constitutional asymmetry. There is also a political asymmetry. Basque nationalism has tended to be separatist (although with a great deal of ambivalence) while mainstream Catalan nationalism has sought home rule within a reconstituted Spain and a role in Spanish politics. Galician nationalism has traditionally been weaker and divided and has never dominated the autonomous parliament. Elsewhere, there are regionalisms of varying strengths, and large parts of the country without any significant regionalist sentiment (Shabad, 1987; Vallés 1987; Pallarés 1990; Pallarés, Montero y Llera, 1997). Despite efforts by successive central governments to impose a uniform pattern on the Autonomous Communities, there remain some differences in powers and large differences in self-identification between the historic nationalities and the rest (Aja 1999).

Despite the progress in decentralization, several issues are still pending: participation of the regions in Europe; relations among autonomous communities; and a reform of the Senate to make it a house of territorial representation. The Basque question is still conflictual. Since 2000, the governing Partido Popular has made the defence of 'Spain'

(against the nationalities and to some degree Europe) a principal motif, and has sought to delegitimize democratic Basque nationalism by linking all nationalism with terrorism. This line has also found some echo within the opposition Socialist Party.

#### *The Spanish Party System: General Evolution 1977-2000*

The history of the Spanish national party system since the transition is one of a long and gradual evolution to a balanced two-party system, with a centre-left and centre-right option, but with a persistent territorial element, particularly in the Basque Country and in Catalonia. At the regional level the same pattern is apparent, although the territorial parties are more strongly established and widespread. Consolidation took place first on the left, with the rise of the Socialist Party (PSOE) (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), a historic social democratic party that had existed before Francoism. The PSOE steadily increased its vote until 1982, when it gained an absolute parliamentary majority that it held until 1993. It then governed as a minority until 1996 when it gave way to the *Partido Popular* (PP) (Popular Party), a centre-right party uniting post-Francoists, moderate conservatives and some Christian democrats and liberals. The PSOE's success was helped by the decline of the Communists, who now survive in the form of *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), a group including other leftist elements. The absence of a democratic conservative tradition in Spain made matters more difficult for the right and although UCD (*Unión de Centro Democrático*) (Union of the Democratic Centre), a broad coalition of conservatives and centrists, dominated the transition governments, it imploded in the early 1980s.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

A conservative contender emerged in the form of *Alianza Popular*, later transformed into the *Partido Popular* (AP/PP) (Popular Party), but suspicions about its Francoist heritage prevented it making real progress until the 1990s. Finally, it came to power as a minority in 1996 under the leadership of José María Aznar, who gained an absolute parliamentary majority in the elections of 2000. The political centre was represented for a time by the CDS (*Centro Democrático y Social*) under Adolfo Suárez, Prime Minister in the transitional period, but this too disintegrated in the late 1980s. This would have left something akin to a balanced two-party national system, but for the presence of territorial parties (Vallés 1991; Pallarés 2001).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

### *The State of the Autonomies and the Party System*

The State of the Autonomies itself has helped to territorialize the party system. It has fostered regional identities and focused the idea of a regional interest, which has since become a prominent factor in national politics. Autonomous elections have encouraged the emergence of local and regional parties, which have then projected themselves into national politics. Autonomous communities have provided new arenas for competition and resources for new political leaders, not dependent on party leadership in Madrid. This has encouraged a territorial fragmentation of party systems and political representation. On the other hand, parties have also helped integrate Spanish regions into national politics. Many of the territorial parties, including the nationalist ones, play a role in Spanish politics, demonstrating the possibility of two level politics, and of articulating dual identities as citizens of a stateless nation and of the Spanish state. Autonomous Communities have produced a new generation of leaders for the state-wide parties and provided power bases for national politicians, again helping to tie in national and regional political processes. The absence of a chamber of territorial representation, in spite of repeated proposals to reform the Senate, and of other federal-type institutions, means that territorial interests are articulated through intergovernmental mechanisms but particularly through the parties. The main steps in the devolution process have taken place as a result either of pacts between the main Spanish parties, or of deals with the nationalist parties for support at the centre.

### *The Non State-Wide Parties (NSWP)*

A considerable number of *non state-wide parties* (NSWPs) have stood in general, regional, local and European elections. Their principal point of reference is the territorial arena in which they carry out their activities and in relation to which they elaborate and project their political proposals. They present their independence from state-wide parties as the best guarantee of the defence of the interests of the Autonomous Community, generating their electoral appeal around this idea (Pallarés, Montero y Llera 1997).

Initially it was thought that parties of this type would be limited to Catalonia and the Basque Country, as expressions of nationalist ideas, with a weaker development in Galicia. Certainly, cultural, linguistic and ethnic factors, all with profound historical

roots, and whose political expression had conflicted with the traditional centralist and authoritarian organisation of the Spanish state, constitute the basis for the nationalist parties in these Autonomous Communities. NSWPs, however, have also developed in Communities without historic or present-day nationalist conflicts, and in some cases have become well-established. This was observable as early as the first democratic general elections (1977 and 1979). However, it was from 1983 onwards - with the proliferation of regional elections and the disappearance of the UCD - that we observe a widespread trend towards NSWP consolidation (Pallarés 1990).

The most prominent nationalist parties exist in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. Catalan nationalism is divided between the governing coalition, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), consisting of a liberal (*Convergència*) and a Christian Democratic (*Unió*) party, and *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) (Catalan Republican Left), a left-leaning party dating from the Second Republic. The CiU follows the traditional Catalan strategy of pushing for more autonomy while still participating in Spanish national politics, while the ERC supports independence, but only in the long-run as part of a Europe of the Peoples. Basque nationalism is divided three ways between the historic and centre-right *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV) (Basque Nationalist Party), *Eusko Alkartasuna*, a social democratic breakaway party which is nevertheless allied to the PNV, and *Batasuna* (which also competed as *Euskal Herritarrok*, *Herri Batasuna*), the political arm of the terrorist group ETA banned in 2002. Galician nationalism has been very fragmented, but during the 1990s, was consolidated under the umbrella of the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG) (Galician Nationalist Bloc), a rather heterogeneous coalition under leftist leadership. As it has abandoned its old extremism and adopted a more moderate regionalist line in Spain and Europe, the BNG has made considerable progress in both regional and state-wide elections.

Secondly, there are strong regionalist parties outside the historic nationalities, of which the only consistently successful example is *Coalición Canaria*, a rather heterogeneous coalition in the Canary Islands, which has established a dominant position through brokerage and clientelist politics, within the various islands of the Canaries. Thirdly, there are minor regionalist parties, often conservative and localist, who have difficulty crossing the electoral threshold for national elections and so have a strong incentive to ally or be absorbed by the larger parties, notably the PP. *Unidad Alavesa* is a right-wing provincialist and anti-nationalist party in the province of Alava in the Basque Country, now largely eclipsed by the PP, which has taken over its voters and many

activists. UPN, a conservative party in Navarre, also provincialist and anti-Basque nationalist, finally merged with the PP. *Partido Aragonés* in Aragón enjoyed some success in the early 1990s before allying with the PP, although it again presented itself separately (and unsuccessfully) in 2000. There is also a progressive Aragonese party, *Chunta Aragonesista*, which elected one deputy in 2000. *Unió Valenciana* in Valencia has usually been able to elect a deputy in the multi-member constituency of Valencia province, but lately has been in trouble mainly because of competition from the PP. Andalucía has a tradition of regionalist parties, although there have been rather small and in 2000 one deputy was elected from the *Partido Andalucista* (Pallarés, Montero and Llera 1997).

### *Territorial Politics and The National Parties*

Regionalisation has also affected the tactics, performance and internal configuration of the Spanish national parties. Both the PP and the PSOE are committed to a more or less unitary vision of the Spanish state and nation but must accommodate the reality of territorial differentiation. PSOE has both centralising and decentralising traditions and in the early twentieth century it was committed to a federal Spain, but in government the centralist vision has prevailed. The PSOE competes in Catalonia as a differentiated party, enabling the PSC (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*) to give the socialist movement a more ‘Catalan complexion’. In the Basque Country it has governed with the PNV, but recently has reinforced an anti-nationalist line, although one sector, notably in the province of Guipuzcoa, more sympathetic to nationalist concerns. The PP has taken a harder anti-nationalist line in both Catalonia and even more in the Basque Country. This has consolidated a certain anti-nationalist vote in the Basque Country but ability to inroads into the PNV vote. In Catalonia, where moderate nationalism makes a more difficult target, the PP’s line has weakened it fatally against CiU. Even the PP has had to compromise with Catalan and Basque nationalism, notably in return for support for its minority national government in 1996. *Izquierda Unida* has also had problems incorporating the territorial dimension. In Catalonia it has been displaced by *Iniciativa per Catalunya*, which includes nationalist-leaning leftists, while in Galicia the local party was disowned by the Madrid leadership for allying with the Socialists at the regional elections.

Decentralisation has also influenced the internal structures of both main parties. Regional organisations of parties gained a bigger important role and provided new power bases and resources for territorial leaders. Given the weakness of mass parties in Spain, control of institutional resources is critical, providing the financial basis for hiring staff



and advisors as well as public goods for distribution to build up client networks. After the PSOE's loss of office at central level and without the charismatic leadership of Felipe Gonzalez, regional barons such as Manuel Chaves in Andalusia and José Bono in Castile-La Mancha used their local power bases to gain a new influence in the party, including over the emergence of a new party leader. A similar, but weaker trend is visible in the PP, where Prime Minister José Maria Aznar came to the party leadership from the regional presidency of Castile and Leon, and former leader Manuel Fraga retired to assume the presidency of his regional fiefdom in Galicia. Other central ministers keep an eye on their regional power bases, often with a view to returning to seek the regional presidency. Jaime Mayor Oreja was sent from Madrid in 2001 to try and wrestle the presidency of the Basque Country from the PNV and, having failed, stayed as leader of the local opposition. Mariano Rajoy, nominated by Aznar as his successor in 2003, was previously seen as a potential successor to Manuel Fraga and retained his personal networks in Galicia. At the same time, regional leaders with institutional power play an important role in the internal politics of the PP, including Eduardo Zaplana, president of Valencia, who in 2002 was appointed a minister in the national government, or Ruiz Gallardón, president of Madrid.

#### *The Institutional setting of Regional Elections*

Elections within the autonomous communities have been a fundamental aspect of the territorialisation of the party system, as the basis for regional political activity. Yet these cannot be considered in isolation from first-order national elections.

#### *The Electoral System*

Although the constitution prescribes proportional representation, for the general (state-wide) elections the electoral law dilutes this by stipulating a system of party lists on the basis of provincial constituencies, with a minimum of two deputies per province. In large provinces like Madrid or Barcelona, the D'Hondt formula produces fairly proportional outcomes, but elsewhere it favours the big state-wide parties and those with a concentrated territorial presence. So in 2000 it took two and a half times as many votes to elect an *Izquierda Unida* deputy as one from *Coalición Canaria*. Although the electoral law allows ACs to design their own electoral system within the proportional formula, all have adopted a system practically identical to the national one. At the autonomous level, however, it is more proportional since there are more deputies per province (Montero,

Llera, Torcal, 1992; Llera, 1998; Pallarés, 1998). A peculiarity in the Basque Country is that the autonomous parliament contains an equal number of deputies from the three constituent provinces (or historic territories as they are known) despite huge population disparities.

For local elections, each municipality is a constituency with a similar system of proportional representation and a number of seats in each that makes it exceptionally proportional (Pallarés and Delgado, 2002). For European elections, the whole of Spain is a single constituency, posing major problems for territorial parties, which have to present a whole slate of candidates and hope to gain a large enough proportion of the total vote to elect a single member. While the Basque and Catalan nationalists are able to do this, other territorial parties have to form rather artificial alliances.

### *Timing of Elections*

The four ACs established under Article 151 (Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia and Andalucia) can set the time of their own elections within the limits of their four-year terms, while the other thirteen ACs hold their elections on the same day, to coincide with national elections. This has repercussions for turnout, electoral behaviour and the configuration of parties.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

### *Turnout and Abstention*

Abstention levels in autonomous elections have averaged 33.7 per cent, above that for national elections and close to the level in municipal elections. This is consistent with the second order notion, but turnout is also influenced by national factors at the time of the elections as well as factors specific to each AC. Taking the different types of elections in Spain as a whole, abstention has usually been between 30 and 40 per cent but in general elections abstention has been lower (20 per cent) where there was a prospect of an important political change. There have been knock-on effects for second order elections - autonomous, municipal and European - which have also had higher abstention rates in times of national demobilisation (1991), falling in times of tight national competition (1995 and 2003) and rising after the political change at national level (1999).<sup>3</sup> This is further evidence for the second-order interpretation. We do find, on the other hand, that

this general trend is mediated by local factors, so as to produce variation among the autonomous communities.

Looking at differences in turnout among ACs we can distinguish three groups. Cantabria, Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha and Valencia, followed by La Rioja, Castilla-Leon and Murcia, have had the highest turnout. Aragon, Madrid, the Basque Country and Asturias are in the median position, along with Navarre, where turnout has fallen over time. The Canaries, Catalonia, Galicia and the Balearic Islands have the lowest turnout, albeit with a steady increase in Galicia and a decline in the Balearics. This ranking tends to be the same for both national and autonomous elections (Justel, 1995; Pallarés, 1994).

### INSERT TABLE 3

There are various explanations for the variation in turnout across ACs. The historic nationalities, which had demanded self-government from the very beginning, might have a tendency towards higher levels of participation. On the other hand, these ACs stage their elections independently of the other ACs, while the others combine theirs with municipal elections, subsequently garnering greater national publicity and, hypothetically, higher levels of mobilisation. One might also expect that the municipal and regional elections would influence each other. Unfortunately, we are not able to control for all these factors and give definitive answers. Regional elections in the historic nations do not show higher levels of turnout overall but at the individual level, however, people who identify strongly with the titular nationality of the historic regions are more likely to vote. Holding all the autonomous elections together does not necessarily increase turnout, but holding them separately is associated with greater variation in turnout (Pallarés, 1994). Long-term experience, including the era before electoral cycles were synchronized, illustrates that holding autonomous and municipal elections at the same time increases turnout in the former. The case of Andalusia shows how national (first order) elections can pull up the turnout in second order elections. Regional and municipal elections also served to pull up participation in the simultaneous European elections of 1987 and 1999. Generally, we can say that the holding of simultaneous elections has an *homogenisation* effect raising turnout to the normal levels of whichever is the higher order election (Pallarés, 1994).

*Autonomous Elections: Voting and Institutional Patterns, 1983-2003*

As each of the autonomous communities has held at least six elections to its regional parliament we can identify certain trends and patterns. A first stage, from 1983 to 1991, was dominated by the PSOE, which at that time also formed the national government in Madrid. A second phase, starting in 1995, was marked by advances by the PP, following a surge in the 1993 general elections that finally led to its gaining power nationally in 1996. Autonomous elections clearly followed national trends, albeit with local variations and ACs tended to be dominated by one party or the other.

INSERT TABLE 4

The national elections of 1982 marked the beginning of the PSOE's dominance, something that was confirmed when it won most AC elections in 1983. The advance of the PP in the 1993 general elections and 1994 European elections ushered in a radical change of control of ACs in 1995. This period was characterised by a demobilisation of PSOE electors in response to the poor image of the government and scandals at the national level. PP voters, on the other hand, had an incentive to express their opposition to the national government in anticipation of a change at that level. Finally, the victory of the PP in the national elections of 1996 was followed by a consolidation of its position in the autonomous elections of 1999 and the national elections of 2000 (Pallarés 1994; 2000). In 2003, PSOE went ahead again, in a context marked by opposition to Aznar's policy on Iraq and a strong nationalisation of the campaign.<sup>4</sup>

INSERT TABLE 5

The theory of second order elections would predict that parties in opposition and minor parties would do well in autonomous elections. In general, the governing party has indeed fallen back in these elections, sometimes along with the principal opposition party, to the advantage of small and non-state-wide (regionalist and minority nationalist) parties. This, of course, plays differently in different ACs on account of local political factors.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

The main finding in Table 6 is the systematic advantage that non-state-wide parties enjoy in autonomous elections. Contrary to the theory of second order elections, national opposition parties do not consistently gained in elections to the autonomous parliaments. The PSOE lost support between the national election of 1996 and the autonomous elections of 1999, although it made up some ground lost at the previous autonomous elections of 1995. The PP has also sometimes done worse in autonomous elections than it did in the national arena. This is due to the presence of remnants of the old CDS at the regional level as well as the presence of non-state-wide competitors on the centre-right. Nevertheless the PSOE has also been losing voters to the NSWPs in autonomous elections. Catalonia represents a good case, with many voters who support both the PP and the PSOE at the national level either opting for the nationalist CiU at the autonomous level or abstaining – much as we would expect in second order elections.

INSERT TABLES 7-8

#### *The Autonomous Governments*

In the control of autonomous governments, PSOE dominated until 1991 with a swing to the PP from 1995. In general, there has not been ‘divided government’, with different parties predominating at each level. On the contrary, the same party has tended to dominate – the main exception being the transitional period from June 1995 until March 1996, following the PP’s triumph at the autonomous elections and its national victory.

INSERT TABLE 9

There has been no universal tendency for the opposition parties to use the autonomous governments as a platform for national opposition. Rather, they have tended to focus on the internal politics of their regions. The absence of a territorial chamber in the national parliament also distances autonomous politics from that in Madrid and discourages regional leaders from playing to a national audience. A more divided situation has existed since 1999 and there is now some tendency towards partisan politics in the relationship between central and autonomous governments, a tendency reinforced by the results of 2003.

Around half of all autonomous governments have been formed by single parties enjoying absolute majorities (Table 10). The next most popular formula is minority governments, which have tended to be rather stable on account of the divided opposition, although in a few cases ad hoc alliances among the opposition parties have caused them problems. Coalition governments have been rarer and, with only two transitory exceptions, have involved one state-wide party with a non state-wide one. Minority governments have not been unstable principally on account of the lack of alternative majorities. Nor have the occasional government crises in the Autonomous Communities had repercussions in national politics.

INSERT TABLE 10 HERE

Intergovernmental conflict in the early 1980s was confined almost entirely to Catalonia and the Basque Country as they found themselves on occasion pitted against the central government. After 1993 there was a greater partisan division between the two levels but the subsequent conflicts were not always structured on party lines (Aja, 1999). Controversies such as that over the transfer of water from the Tajo to the Segura, or the financing of autonomous governments, also led to clashes between governments of the same political colour.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE 11

### *Electoral Competition and Party Systems*

#### *The Structure of the Party Systems*

The party systems in most Autonomous Communities are dominated by the big state-wide parties, with the exceptions of Catalonia, the Basque Country, the Canaries and, to a lesser extent, Galicia. The party system in each AC is shaped by general factors as well as those specific to individual Autonomous Communities, while patterns of party domination tend to be the same at both levels. Through the 1980s there was a general pattern of stability, followed by a period of greater volatility and then a re-stabilisation around the dominance of the PP, with some recovery by the PSOE and in 1999 and 2003. Over the whole period, the PSOE has remained the largest party in Andalucia, Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha, while the PP has always won in Galicia and the

Balearics and the PNV has been dominant in the Basque Country. There has been a tendency towards bipolar competition as the state-wide third parties have declined – principally the CDS at the end of the 1980s and the IU in the late 1990s. The position of non-state-wide parties also stabilised. Overall, there is a pattern of moderate party competition, with most ACs clearly dominated by one party, but opposition forces providing at least the prospect of alternation at some point in the future (Pallares 1994; 2000; Oñate, 2000).

### *Nationalisation of Electoral Results*

To analyse differences in behaviour between national and autonomous elections, we use the ‘*dissimilarity index*’, a measure identical to the volatility index but used to compare successive elections of different types (Caciagli and Spreafico, 1975; Corbetta and Parisi, 1984, 1985; Johnston, 1980). This cannot be taken on its own as an indicator of the national-regional differences, since the changes may be due to factors operating across the whole country between the two elections. Only in the rare cases where autonomous and national elections take place simultaneously would this problem not arise. So to control for this effect we need take into consideration the volatility between elections of the same type, both national and autonomous. As Table 12 shows, for Spain as a whole, and at the AC level, the *volatility* between elections of the same type has tended to be rather similar to that between elections of different types (Index of *dissimilarity*).

### INSERT TABLE 12

The exceptions are those Autonomous Communities that we have already identified as having distinct characteristics. Catalonia, Aragon, the Balearics and Navarre show more volatility between levels of elections than among elections of either level separately. Of these, only Catalonia shows large differences between national and autonomous elections, demonstrating the clearly differentiated electoral dynamics (Pallarés 1994; Pallarés y Font, 1994; Pallarés 2000b) while terrorism is a crucial factor in explaining dynamics of party competition in the Basque Country (Llera 1994, 1999).

### *The Non-State-Wide Parties*

Overall, the non-state-wide-parties have gained 12-20 per cent of the vote in Spain, with a small decline from 1983 until 1991 and a period of consolidation since then. This figure, however, covers considerable differences across the ACs. Up until the mid-1990s

there was a rise in the nationalist vote in the Basque Country and Catalonia, followed by a period of stabilisation and then one of decline. In Catalonia this has left the Socialists consistently in the lead in Spanish national elections, reflecting the significance of the dual vote (see below). In the Basque Country, the nationalists pulled ahead of the non-nationalists in the 1980s but from 1993 the non-nationalists overtook them again, and were considerably stronger in 2000. In both Catalonia and the Basque Country, this is at least partly a result of the rise of the PP, previously considered too close to Francoism, which is now gaining a larger share of the conservative electorate which might be expected to support it on social and economic policies. In Galicia, where the PP has traditionally done well, the BNG progressed in the 1990s at the expense of the Socialists while also absorbing the remains of previous nationalist formations like *Coalición Galega*. By 2000, the BNG had almost caught up with the Socialists, whom they had already overtaken in regional elections. In the Canaries, *Coalición Canaria* has steadily improved its position and started to differentiate its performance at the autonomous elections from that in the national poll.

TABLE 13

The study of the attitudinal profiles of the NSWPs (Pallares et al. 1997) shows us that in the case of the *nationalist* parties, their level of electoral support reflects the historic deficit of *national integration* within the framework of the Spanish State. It also underlines the fact that those parties are founded – if not exclusively - on their capacity to mobilise those voters who perceive their own national identity, and that of their autonomous community, as conflicting with that of the state.

Deficits of *national integration*, however, do not explain the electoral support for *regionalist* parties. Nor do they explain why important sectors of the electorate with some kind of Spanish national identity choose moderate regional *nationalist* parties as instruments to represent and channel their political demands, especially in elections to the autonomous parliaments. In both cases we must consider other types of factors which, whilst related to the territorial level, are of an instrumental nature and derive from the original process of democratic consolidation. The party system developed within the context of a simultaneous process of creating and developing the State of the Autonomies and this fundamentally affected it (Pallarés, Montero and Llera, 1997).



Within the double and simultaneous process of configuration of the party system and the *Estado de las Autonomías*, the NSWPs have developed as territorially based instruments for channelling demands and expressing expectations for which the state-wide parties are not considered suitable. In this context, the diversity and function of the NSWPs are a characteristic of the Spanish political process and party system, through which they contribute - to different degrees and with the notable exception of *Batasuna* in the Basque Country - to political integration in a decentralised State. They do this through their role in national politics, which includes supporting the minority governments of the main Spanish parties, while delivering gains for their own territories. So another incentive for regionalist voting was the role of the Catalan and Basque nationalist parties and the regionalists in the Canaries under the successive PSOE and PP minority governments of 1993 and 1996. These were able to bargain for concessions on autonomy and fiscal matters in return for supporting the state government. For a time it appeared that minority governments might be the norm, given the nature of the electoral system, putting those regions with their own parties in a key position. The achievement of an absolute majority by the PP in 2000, however, has reduced this incentive and increased the incentive to be within the winning coalition.

### *Dual Voting*

Although the overall differences in outcomes in national and autonomous elections are minor for Spain as a whole, there is a notable difference in the performance of non-state-wide parties, which clearly do better in the latter. This reflects both differential abstention and dual voting. Differential abstention is an important explanation in Catalonia (Font y Contreras, 1998; Riba, 2000; Pallarés, 2000c) and, to a lesser extent, the Basque Country (Llera, 1999). Elsewhere we find a sector of the electorate opting for a state-wide party at national elections and for a none-state-wide party in the autonomous elections.

In Catalonia, the main exchange of votes is between the CiU and the PSOE and, to a lesser extent, the CiU and the PP (Montero y Font 1991; Riba, 2000; Pallarés, 2000c). Since 1983 there has been dual voting in Aragon between the AP/PP and the PAR and, to a less extent, the PAR and the PSOE (Montero, Pallarés, Oñate, 1995). In Navarre there was an exchange of votes between the UPN and the AP/PP until the merger of the UPN with the PP in 1993. In the Basque Country there is some transfer of votes between the PNV and the PSOE, on the one hand, and the PP and the PNV on the

other, despite the polarisation in Basque politics and the apparent rigidity of electoral alignments (Llera, 1999, 2001; Pallarés 2002). The movement of votes in the Canaries has been more complicated, due to the distinct party dynamics and insularity of politics there. The high index of dissimilarity in Cantabria is due to the rise and fall of the UPCA in the general and autonomous elections in the early 1990s. A smaller but less stable pattern of exchange has stabilised between the PSOE and the PP on the one hand and the *Partido Regionalista de Cantabria* (PRC) on the other. The same phenomenon can be observed in the Balearics between the AP/PP and *Unió Mallorquina* (UM), in Valencia between the AP/PP and *Unió Valenciana*, and in La Rioja.

Although dual voting has multiple motivations, it seems to be linked at the individual level to instrumental concerns and a vision of state-wide parties based on ideological criteria and one of the non-state-wide party based on regional interests (Pallarés, Montero, Llera, 1997). Located towards the centre of the political spectrum, these voters are also able to use their votes strategically to play the multilevel game both electorally and through the institutions of government.

At the system level, dual voting serves a double role of integration. It integrates the party system, especially on the centre-right, preventing the extremes of fragmentation and antagonism from getting out of control. It also serves to integrate the two levels of government, discouraging confrontations that might scare off dual voters. The instrumental use of dual voting, of course, is dependent on the strategic choices and attitudes of the parties and can change in the short term, as is observable in the case of Catalonia where the CiU has changed alliances at the national and autonomous levels in recent years (Pallarés, 2000b, 2001).

### *Conclusion*

Autonomous elections are a new experience in Spain, except for the brief existence in the Second Republic. Decentralisation has been marked by fears and uncertainties on the part of central actors of fragmentation and of losing control of the political process. Autonomous elections have played a key role in this. They have been a source of legitimacy to the autonomous governments. They have provided an arena for party competition and the distribution of political resources within the Autonomous Communities; and they have moulded new types of relations among electors, parties and institutions in general.

The general similarity between electoral behaviour at both levels suggests that there are not two separate spheres of party competition. Electoral choices expressing distinct orientations and preferences at different levels are certainly not the rule. On the contrary, there has been a nationalisation of electoral behaviour, with similar factors operating at both levels. It is within this overall pattern that the specific characteristics of regional electoral behaviour must be assessed, and these have been most marked in Catalonia and the Basque Country and to a lesser extent in the Canaries.

Autonomous elections can in many ways be seen as second order elections, with lower turnout levels and results still have a tendency to reflect national events. The patterns of electoral behaviour point in the same direction, with slightly less votes for the state-wide parties and a higher level of support for the non state-wide parties. Autonomous elections between two general elections do provide these polls with the opportunity of being *mid term* elections, strongly influenced by the dynamics of electoral competition in the first order arena (Bibby, 1983). Even the greater proportionality in the system for autonomous elections fails to change behaviour significantly (Pallarés, 1994). Yet, even though autonomous elections reflect electoral competition at the national level, they do still possess their own characteristics.

Autonomous elections have certainly served to shape the distribution of political resources at both levels. The decisive role of the state-wide parties in the development of the State of the Autonomies was possible because of their electoral dominance in most of the Autonomous Communities. Equally, the role of the CiU and the PNV in national level politics was made possible by their role as governing parties in their respective Autonomous Communities. There is therefore a constant interaction between the two levels and, while the state level arena and party system may be dominant, it has been conditioned in important ways by the process of decentralisation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Foral systems are those based on the historic rights, or *fueros*, which existed widely across Spain but are of particular importance in the Basque provinces and Navarre. Alava (one of the three Basque provinces) and Navarre kept many of their historic rights even under Franco, while the other Basque provinces lost theirs.

<sup>2</sup> The intention was that, in the long run, even though ACs could proceed down different paths, they could eventually arrive at the same level of autonomy. In the short and medium term, those processing under article 151 possess greater powers.

<sup>3</sup> In 1999, the coincidence that regional and general elections take place on the same day in Andalucia – the most populated AC - contributed to a low level of abstention in the regional elections. Without Andalucia, the abstention mean in 1999 rises to 35.5 and represents a clear expression of the demobilisation effect that existed after the change of government in the national arena .

<sup>4</sup> From table 3 it appears that PP are slightly ahead in the regional elections of 2003. However elections were not held in Andalucia, Galicia, the Basque Country or Catalonia then. Our remark about PSOE being ahead takes into account the most recent autonomous elections in those regions. It is also the case that PSOE was ahead in the municipal elections held in all parts of Spain along with the regional elections of 2003.

<sup>5</sup> See the annual edition of the *Informe Comunidades Autónomas* to follow with detail the development of the ACs and the State of the Autonomies as a whole.